

QA-151

120 South Commerce Street

circa 1794-98

Centreville

Private

This small brick dwelling house was constructed by James Croney soon after he purchased the lot from Elizabeth Nicholson in December 1793. It is one of two similar houses built by Croney between 1794 and 1798. Both buildings feature the double parlor plan found in the original section of Tucker House.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

MAGI #1801515204

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Crony-Skinner House

JUG 9/14/93

AND/OR COMMON

120 South Commerce Street**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

West side of South Commerce Street

CITY, TOWN

Centreville

___ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Queen Anne's**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

___ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

___ STRUCTURE

___ SITE

___ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

___ PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

___ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

___ IN PROCESS

___ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

___ UNOCCUPIED

___ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

___ YES: UNRESTRICTED

___ NO

PRESENT USE

___ AGRICULTURE

☒ COMMERCIAL

___ EDUCATIONAL

___ ENTERTAINMENT

___ GOVERNMENT

___ INDUSTRIAL

___ MILITARY

___ MUSEUM

___ PARK

___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

___ RELIGIOUS

___ SCIENTIFIC

___ TRANSPORTATION

___ OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

William F. Grovermann

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

9 Cathedral Street

CITY, TOWN

Annapolis

___ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21401**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Queen Anne's County CourthouseLiber #: CWC 75Folio #: 318

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Centreville

STATE

Maryland**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

QA-151

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☒ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The small brick and frame building at 120 South Commerce Street is one of the most intriguing buildings in Centreville. The present appearance of the street facade is the result of a major renovation undertaken during the late 19th or early 20th century. The gable walls and rear facade, however, retain much of the original fabric of a small brick dwelling that probably dates to the last decade of the 18th century.

The original house was two bays wide and one-and-one-half stories high, with a steep pitched roof parallel to the street and a pair of chimneys on the north gable wall. The first floor was raised above a full cellar, and the front facade was probably laid in Flemish bond. The door would have been located in the left or south bay, with a single window, probably nine-over-six or six-over-six, in the north bay. It seems likely that there were also cellar windows below each first floor opening.

The gable walls remain largely intact. The north gable is laid in four-course bond, with a series of headers omitted leaving a pattern of

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.1 DESCRIPTION

"put-log" holes, similar to the Blue Lantern Inn (QA-148), located several houses to the north on the same block. There are two chimneys on this facade, each projecting approximately five inches from the wall up to the first floor eave line, then corbeling back flush. A bricked-up original window opening to the left of the east chimney on the first floor was the only opening on this wall.

The south gable is laid in Flemish bond, without put-log holes. A pair of two-over-two windows on the first floor and a smaller single window in the upper gable remain functional, but both cellar windows on this wall have been bricked up.

The rear facade has been altered considerably. The brickwork is laid in four-course bond, but the original openings have been blocked and new openings cut in, leaving a disorderly mass of conflicting seams, patches, and openings. It would appear that the original fenestration consisted of a door in the center of the facade with a window to the left (north), but no opening to the right. Both of the original openings were lowered when the interior floor level was dropped to street level, leaving seams to show where the upper part of each opening was filled in. A new door was cut in to the right of the original door, allowing

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.2 DESCRIPTION

exterior access to the second floor apartment.

Nothing remains of the original interior. When the renovation took place, the interior was completely gutted. Several period doors remain on the second floor, and a number of shoring timbers below the first floor are evidently reused floor joists, as one of them displays a regular row of wrought T-head nails along the top face.

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This small brick building on South Commerce Street is one of the oldest structures surviving in downtown Centreville, dating to the last decade of the 18th century. The original story-and-a-half brick dwelling had a two-room plan similar to Tucker House (QA-139) and the Robinette House (QA-156), two houses nearby which were later modified with the addition of side halls. Surviving examples of this plan type are quite unusual, and the close proximity of these three examples suggests it may have been more common in this area than generally assumed. Although this building has been altered considerably, several details of interest have survived. These include the Flemish bond brickwork on the south gable wall and the exposed put-log holes on the north gable.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This building was one of two nearly identical dwelling houses constructed circa 1794-1798 by James Croney, a cabinetmaker from Caroline County. He purchased one-eighth acre, part of Lot No. 4, from Elizabeth Nicholson on December 31, 1793 for \$6.5.0.⁽¹⁾ On the same day, Croney's father-in-law, William Cannan, purchased part of Lot No. 3 and Lot No. 4, directly adjoining Croney's lot to the north.⁽²⁾ Evidently Croney commenced construction of both houses soon thereafter, for the 1797 Tax Assessment lists him as the owner of both lots, with improvements, valued at \$1700.⁽³⁾ The 1798 Federal Direct Tax is even more explicit, describing both houses in detail.⁽⁴⁾

Lot No. 4 in Centreville

1 Brick dwelling house 25 x 15

8 windows without glass and unfinished

1 granary 30 x 12

1 logg corn house 8 x 12

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Part of Lot No. 3 in Centreville

1 Dwelling house 1 1/2 stories brick 27 x 17

not fully plastered

1 kitchen logg 10 x 12

small garden house

The latter entry refers to 116 South Commerce Street (QA-150), the original section of which measures 27 x 17, but has been enlarged by the addition of a stair hall along the south gable, and has been raised from 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 stories. ⁽⁵⁾

It is apparent that both houses were unfinished in 1798, and in view of Croney's 4 year ownership of the property, as well as financial difficulties in the years following, it seems likely that work had ceased on the buildings by 1798. ⁽⁶⁾

Between 1798 and 1803, Croney sold both lots in a series of somewhat confusing transactions. In 1798 he sold 42 square perches, comprising the west end of the two lots, fronting on Back or Liberty Street, to Charles Farrow, a cabinetmaker from Chestertown. ⁽⁷⁾ In 1799, Croney sold 1/8 acre, part of Lot No. 4, to Zebulon Skinner, ⁽⁸⁾ and in 1803 he sold his remaining

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.3 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

interest in Lots No. 3 and 4 to Zebulon Skinner's two sons, William and Zebulon.⁽⁹⁾ No mention is made of any buildings, but it would appear that the 1/8 acre sold to Skinner in 1799 included the brick house known today as 120 South Commerce Street.

The 1798 Tax description is the last clear reference to the property until 1865, when Daniel Newnam's estate is settled, and a deed is recorded conveying the property to Sarah Goldsborough. This deed notes "the principal improvements on the lot now conveyed being a brick dwelling 1 1/2 stories high and meat house..."⁽¹⁰⁾

Tax lists have survived for Centreville for the period 1824-1860, and among Newnam's property holdings is an entry for part of Lot No. 4, improved. This entry appears in the earliest surviving list, and suggests that Newnam gained possession of the lot before 1824. However, several other owners are listed for parts of Lot No. 4, and ownership cannot be positively established.⁽¹¹⁾

Sarah Goldsborough had evidently purchased the house and lot from Newnam before his death, for the deed recorded in 1865 notes that the executors were

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.4 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

merely formalizing an earlier sale, giving the price as \$1825.

In 1876, Sarah Goldsborough sold the property to William W. Busted for \$675.⁽¹²⁾ The boundary description remains the same, and it is not clear why the price declined so dramatically. Perhaps the interior was destroyed by fire, or perhaps other considerations entered into the sale. In 1878, Busted sold the lot and improvements to Benjamin C. Watson.⁽¹³⁾ It is Watson's name which appears next to the building on the 1877 Atlas map of Centreville.⁽¹⁴⁾ Watson sold the land to Ann C. Nicholson in 1882,⁽¹⁵⁾ and following the death of Ann Nicholson in 1896 it passed to Joanna Nicholson,⁽¹⁶⁾ who sold the property to Annie B. Price in 1905 for \$350.⁽¹⁷⁾ During the Nicholson's ownership, the lot was divided in two, and the south half was sold separately. It is on this smaller lot that Jean Tubman's store now stands. The north half of the lot, sold to Annie B. Price, is described as being "improved by a small brick dwelling house, with a frame second story recently added..."

Following the death of Annie B. Price in 1922, the property passed to Sallie E. Wilmer,⁽¹⁸⁾ who sold

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.5 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

it in 1923 to Irene A. Straughn and Elizabeth Straughn. (19)

Irene Straughn died about the year 1939, leaving Elizabeth Straughn as the surviving joint tenant.

In 1961, Elizabeth Straughn conveyed the property to James H. Straughn and his daughter, Laurlene Straughn Pratt. (20)

They sold the land in 1968 to Doris C. Loveland, (21) and in 1973 Doris Loveland in turn sold it to William F. Grovermann, the present owner. (22)

Footnotes

- (1) Deeds, Liber STW 2, folio 512. December 31, 1793.
- (2) Deeds, Liber STW 2, folio 550. December 31, 1793.
- (3) 1797 Tax Assessment. It is clear that Croney had nearly completed 116 South Commerce Street by the fall of 1795, as William Cannan's will, executed November 15, 1795 and probated January 7, 1796 included the following entry:
 ...I give and devise unto my
 daughter Sarah Croney...the
 House and Lott in Centreville
 whereon she now lives, the Lott
 containing 5/8 of an acre...
- (4) 1798 Federal Direct Tax, Wye Hundred.
- (5) Refer to inventory form prepared for QA-150, 116 South Commerce Street. The two buildings are nearly identical in size, plan, and detail, exclusive of later alterations.
- (6) Croney sold all of his Centreville property in the ensuing five years and evidently returned to Caroline County. Refer also to footnote 3 above, which shows 116 South Commerce was sufficiently completed by November 1795 for the Croney's to have occupancy, yet in 1798 it was not completely plastered.

Footnotes (Cont'd)

- (7) Deeds, Liber STW 4, folio 417. May 8, 1798.
- (8) Deeds, Liber STW 4, folio 158. November 30, 1799.
- (9) Deeds, Liber STW 7, folio 12. December 5, 1803.
Also refer to Deeds, Liber STW 5, folio 229,
May 12, 1800; and Deeds, Liber STW 5, folio 457,
April 4, 1801.
- (10) Deeds, Liber SED 1, folio 427. January 13, 1865.
- (11) These tax lists are stored at the Maryland Hall
of Records. Typed transcripts have been prepared
for 1824 and at 5 year intervals for the period
1830-1860. These are included in the Historic
Sites Inventory research notes.
- (12) Deeds, Liber SW 6, folio 60. May 13, 1876.
- (13) Deeds, Liber JW 8, folio 9. February 8, 1878.
- (14) 1877 Atlas of Kent and Queen Anne's Counties
- (15) Deeds, Liber SCD 1, folio 465. May 26, 1882.
- (16) Wills, Liber FR 1, folio 255. Last Will and
Testament of Ann C. Nicholson. Executed April
10, 1890. Probated April 21, 1896.
- (17) Deeds, Liber JEG 8, folio 112. August 15, 1905.

Footnotes (Cont'd)

- (18) Wills, Liber WTB 1, folio 310. Last Will and Testament of Annie B. Price, Executed Sept. 25, 1919. Probated October 3, 1922.
- (19) Deeds, Liber BHT 12, folio 462. January 30, 1923.
- (20) Deeds, Liber TSP 63, folio 583. December 6, 1961.
- (21) Deeds, Liber CWC 37, folio 574. September 30, 1968.
- (22) Deeds, Liber CWC 75, folio 318. June 18, 1973.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Orlando Ridout V, Historic Sites Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Queen Anne's County Historical Society

DATE

1/12/79

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Centreville

STATE

Maryland 21617

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

CENTREVILLE

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NEW



QA-151
Crony-Skinner
House

Mary McCarthy
Spring/Summer 2003
Digital color photo on file at MHT





QA 151

Croney-Skinner House
120 S. Commerce St.

EBD. Jr.



04-151 120 S. Commerce St

Centerville

044 1979